1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

inches of water for seventeen days, apart from having to cross numerous deep depressions. In some parts of Lou and Eastern Jikany, particularly in Gaajak, people build in open thornwood forest, but generally Nuer prefer to make their villages in open country, even where there is forest near-by, because their cattle are better protected from wild beasts, insect pests, and damp, and also, apparently, because millet does not do so well in wooded country. Building in the open seems also to give freedom from termites.

A Nuer homestead consists of a cattle byre and huts. Their byres are of size and workmanship that have evoked the admiration of all travellers. Their form, and the appearance of huts, may be seen in several plates, and their mode of construction is excellently portrayed in Mr. Corfield's photograph (Plate XVIII). It is only necessary to explain that the roofs are supported by trunks of trees erected inside the barns. Both byres and huts are of wattle and daub, though in Western Nuerland, where there is less forest, bundles of millet stalks are employed as rafters. Building and repairs generally take place early in the dry season when there is plenty of straw for thatching and enough millet to provide beer for those who assist in the work. During the rains fences are erected from the byres along two sides of the kraal and around huts to control the movements of cattle and to prevent them messing the homesteads and damaging the crops (Plate XVII). Grazing and the use of grass, trees, &c., is the common right of all members of a village community.

Families often change their place of residence from one part of a village to another and from village to village, and, in the case of small villages, if there have been many deaths, the cattle are poorly, there have been fights within the village, or pastures and cultivations are exhausted, the whole village community may move to a new site. After about ten years both pastures and gardens show evident signs of exhaustion on the smaller ridges, and huts and byres need rebuilding after some five years.

In dry-season camps men sleep in windscreens and women in beehive-huts, or both sexes in beehive-huts. These flimsy shelters are erected a few yards from water, generally in a semi-circle or in lines with their backs to the prevailing wind, and

J: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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342 are simply constructed, the roots of grasses, or occasionally
573 stems of millet, being tightly packed in a narrow trench to make windscreens, and the tops of the grasses being bound together and plastered with dung on the outside to make huts (Plates XV (*a*), XIX (*a*), and XXI (*b*)). The whole space within a windscreen is occupied by a hearth of ashes on which the men sleep around a fire, and the openings face the kraal. If people do not intend to spend more than a few days at a site they often sleep in the open and do not trouble to erect windscreens and huts. These light dwellings can be erected in a few hours.

IV

221 Another circumstance that determines Nuer movements is
136 the abundance of insect life, which is an ever-present menace,
231 for the cattle get little rest from stinging flies and ticks from morn till nightfall and would be worried to death if their masters did not give them some protection.

136 Mosquitoes swarm in the rains, their ravages being terrible
231 from July to September, when, as soon as the sun sets, men and
372 beasts have to take refuge in huts and byres. The doors of the huts are tightly closed, the air-holes blocked, and fires lit. In the centre of the byres, which house the cattle, burn large dung fires which fill them with smoke so dense that one cannot even see the cattle. Young men sleep on platforms above the fires, and if the smoke clears—the doors are shut, but it escapes through the thatched roof—they descend to pile on more fuel. By this means the beasts are enabled to obtain some rest at night. At the end of the rains while the cattle are still in the villages they are left in the kraals till their masters go to bed, when they are shut in the byres to protect them from lions. Fires are not made up so high at this season, for mosquitoes are less troublesome, since there is no surface water, the millet has been cut, and the grasses are close-cropped. Later those men who remain in the villages, while the others go into camps, often erect windscreens in the kraals and spend the night outside with any cows which have been left behind. In the dry season mosquitoes are absent except near pools and marshes, and even in the vicinity of water they are not troublesome from January to May, so that the herds can sleep in the open. Nevertheless,

2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931,1936) 1951
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his maternal uncle—generally it would be the mother's uterine brother—for a bull-calf with the markings of the new ox-name he has taken. Though he cannot demand it as a right, he may curse his uncle's herd so that the male calves die if he is refused his request. It seems that the customary way of making this request is for the nephew to make an incision on the ear of the calf he desires. A man may not bury his maternal uncle, and I believe that a mother's brother should not bury his sister's son. Were a man to bury his maternal uncle he would die of *keth nara*, a disease which is said to cause white patches on the skin. The same disease may attack a man who hears that his maternal uncle has been wounded or cut himself severely and does not visit him and place some of the blood on his foot. Should the nephew not hear of the uncle's wound and contract the disease, he visits him and gets him to rub soot from the bottom of a pot on the affected surfaces. A man and his maternal uncle may not tether their cattle together in the same kraal, though the cattle may graze together. If one of the uncle's beasts dies the nephew may not skin it, for were he to do so he would destroy the uncle's herd and people would say that 'he had spilt the cattle of his uncle to the ground'. An uncle may not give his sister's son a spear-shaft, for the gift might cause him serious injury. A man and his sister's son must not use the same sleeping-hide or sleep in the same hut. These rules, especially those which forbid a man tethering his cattle in his uncle's kraal, skinning his uncle's beasts, and sleeping in the same hut as his uncle, seem almost designed to keep the two apart, to prevent a youth identifying himself with his maternal kin instead of with his paternal kin.

The maternal uncle is the kinsman who most often blesses a lad in the Nuer way of blessing, by spitting on the head. Grandparents may sometimes do this, but other relatives rarely. If a man comes frequently to visit his sister and partakes of her hospitality and does not occasionally spit on her child's head, the child may get the disease I have mentioned above. It is also said that when a maternal uncle rises during the day from a nap in the ashes of the hearth and his sister's son rubs the ashes off his back he must then spit on the lad's head. But if the blessing of a maternal uncle is desired, his curse is believed to be among the worst, if not the worst, a Nuer can receive, for, unlike the father, a maternal uncle may curse a youth's cattle, as well as his crops

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

Everyone wakes before sunrise and satisfies the needs of nature. For about three quarters of an hour after sunrise men sit by their hearths protected by windscreens and women outside their beehive grass huts chatting, smoking and gazing at the cattle which lie, still sleeping, many with their muzzles tucked into their barrels, and chew the cud. Being close together they rub their bodies against one another and lick each other. They present a medley of colour: fawn, grey, mouse, black, brown, blue and chestnut-roan, with many variations of shade and distribution.

The huts and windscreens are generally erected in a semi-circle with their backs to the prevailing wind, though they sometimes form an almost complete circle and at other times are arranged in lines. Windscreens are of simple construction. A narrow trench is dug for three quarters of a circle and handfuls of grass are planted, root downwards into the trench. Each handful is beaten tightly against the last one so that a solid screen of grass is formed. The grasses generally used for this purpose are *dut in lum*, a tall coarse riverside grass called *wath* (*Sorghum lanceolatum Stapf.*) and *war* (*Vetiveria nigritiana Stapf*). Where camps are made near villages millet stalks are sometimes used instead of grass. All these grasses are tall and sturdy and they bend to the wind and do not break. Men sleep in the shelter of these screens on the hearths which occupy the whole of the enclosed space. Here the fire is never allowed to go out, and from day to day the height of the hearth is slowly raised by accumulation of ashes. Women make huts in the same way as men make windscreens but they bend the tops of the grasses so that they meet. They are then tied together and the sides are plastered with cattle dung. Within these flimsy shelters which contrast with the massive byres and well-built huts of their wet season villages Nuer spend about half the year. Sometimes, as at Yakwac, a camp is made in a wet season village belonging to kinsmen at the edge of a river. Then the men desert their windscreens at midday for the cool interiors of the byres and the women sleep at night in the village huts instead of erecting special grass huts. But even when, as in certain parts of Nuerland where there is no great deficiency of water

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

vary much from month to month for there are few seasonal changes at this time of the year. As the river falls it is possible to fish in lagoons and shallows and to bathe on its sandy bed. Then the lagoons dry up. When the river rises fish swim in the weeds and rushes and along some streams they are easily speared from the banks. The banks of the Sobat are too steep for this purpose. There are no longer shallows and bathing is a hasty dip for there is danger from crocodiles. The grazing grounds are changed from time to time as they become exhausted and as streams and lagoons dry up. At Yakwac there was succulent pasturage only where marsh plants still retained their moisture at the river end of lagoons. The people are still in camp when the first rains fall at the end of April or early in May and then there is everywhere an abundance of pasturage. The brown bush becomes green and the baked fissured earth a sodden mire. Dry lagoons become inland flowing streams. The scorching sun is clouded.

On the Sobat we guessed that the first rains had fallen inland by the migration of wild animals from its banks. Giraffe now left us for inland pastures where they would not have to face death every time they approached the river. Other animals likewise moved southwards, even the gazelle. On the northern bank, however, buffaloes still came to the river to drink and were attacked by hungry Nuer. Animals and men must obey the seasons and when there is no water except in inland lakes and lagoons, men, cattle, and wild beasts must drink at the same places. One can hear them at night cautiously coming to the pools to drink. When the rains come all leave for new pastures.

In May one knows that the move back to the wet season villages will shortly take place not only by cloudy skies and movements of game, but also by camp activities. The women are the first to leave camp and one meets them along paths, carrying their household goods in rectangular cane baskets. Youths leave camp early in the morning to cut stakes, generally of thornwood (*bwau*) and they spend a large part of the day shaping them into tethering pegs. They also twist new cord. The weather being cooler people do not feel so keenly the need to sleep towards noon. Everyone is becoming restless and

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

Chapter Three

FAMILY LIFE IN NUERLAND

THE HOUSE AND ITS FURNISHINGS

THE Nuer does not live to himself. He is a part of his 626
particular village, and his actions affect all his relatives, no matter how distant the relationship may be. This fact checks him to some extent in his misdeeds, for any infringement of Nuer law not only affects him but all his people as well. He must give heed to them and to Nuer law in general if he is to count on their support and aid in time of need (Fig. 7).

The men and boys of the village usually sleep in the 513
barn which is to be found in most villages. A house is set aside for the sleeping quarters of the girls. The women and little children sleep in the houses.

The Nuer house is conical in shape. It has mud walls 342
up to about three feet or more from the ground, then the sloping grass roof. There are no windows. A door, woven like a mat, is made of grass. If the weather is cool, a fire is made inside the house and the smoke goes out through the roof. At night the door is tightly closed in order to keep wild animals out, so the ventilation is indeed poor.

A fence of cane-stalks is made and encloses a small yard. 351
The door of this fence as well as the door of the house are made low so that one must stoop in order to get in.

The yard is swept clean—a bunch of grass tightly tied [412]
together at one end suffices for a broom. One part of the 252
enclosure is plastered with mud for a radius of two or three feet, and in the centre is a hole, also plastered, in which the women may be found pounding the dura, making use of a long pole. The dura is pounded very fine, the coarser parts being sifted out by shaking it on a grass

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

252 tray. The dura can be pounded as fine as flour, but that involves much physical labour. The woman frequently chants a song as she pounds.

415 The household furnishings vary in number, but in most of the average homes the following articles which are considered necessary (Fig. 4) by the Nuer are to be found.

A large earthen vessel for carrying water.

An earthen cooking-pot.

A long-necked gourd having a small hole in the end of the neck. This is used as a milk-pail; milk may also be churned in it by taking hold of the neck and shaking the gourd vigorously to and fro.

Several half-gourds of various sizes which are used as dishes for food; the smaller ones may be used as drinking cups.

A number of mussel shells for use as spoons. Spoons are also made of the horn of the antelope.

A clay pipe with a long stem—this is much in evidence.

A large earthen container for dura (kaffir corn).

Network bags made out of grass rope. These are used to hold gourds of various sizes.

A large basket, woven in openwork pattern, to hold various possessions when travelling.

411 A spear and a fishing spear.

A big-headed club, and also smaller clubs.

513 A ring made of cane-leaves is used as a pillow by the women. The pillow for men is made out of a piece of a tree and has three legs. Part of a tree is chosen where the branches fork in the desired direction.

854 A baby basket woven of a certain pliable kind of wood, and also a grass mat to cover it with.

352 Skins of sheep are used as rugs to sit on, and the skin of the waterbuck makes an ideal bed.

354 A fire, with earthen shield to protect it from the wind,

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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000 the pistol was brought and another bullet was fired into the lifeless body of the victim.

One wonders what happened during the next hour when the women came to fill their water-jars. What would their thoughts be as they stepped down the river bank and at a turn in the path encountered the brainless, tailless body of a huge crocodile? Would they think of the dreadful fate from which they had been saved, just because a launch happened to pass that way a few minutes before, or would they grieve because the choicest steak had already been taken?

512 The woman has the bulk of the work, but she seems to expect it. When the day's toil is over, the dura pounded, the two meals cooked, the water carried, the children cared for, the mother sits there in the light of the smudge fire which is made to keep mosquitoes away. She has had [521] a busy day. Now they all sit around in the firelight, visiting, or telling tales of long ago, or maybe they are telling [534] riddles. Some one may be strumming a native-made stringed musical instrument, another may be singing, and ● [513] yet the conversation goes on uninterruptedly. If in the light of the moon, bedtime does not come early—probably not until ten or twelve o'clock or later—but if it is in the dark of the moon, they seek sleep earlier and nine or ten o'clock finds the village quiet. Another day is past, the woman is in her home, her children about her, her husband satisfied with his food for the day and happy with her. What more could she wish?

512 The baby must be cared for during the day and taken
853 up and nursed every time it cries. The Nuer baby is nursed until it is at least two years of age, and more often until it is three or even four. They have a superstition that usually keeps the husband and wife from having
000 another child while a child is not yet weaned. Water

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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by the children falls to her. When just a little girl she must take a gourd and carry water, learning to balance it on her head. She must help to care for the baby, carrying it astride one hip, with her arm around it. Cane-stalks must be brought for fuel, or she may accompany her mother when she goes to the forest to get wood. She gathers sticks of wood, binding them together with grass, and carries them home on her head. Or she may accompany her mother when she goes out to cut grass for roofing the houses. She early learns to carry her burden poised on top of her head.

As she grows older she learns to pound dura and to sift and cook it. She learns all the art of the Nuer housekeeper and, indeed, soon becomes a small replica of her mother.

The little girls play 'keeping house' and imitate their mothers to the best of their ability.

The older girls of the village usually have a house given them for sleeping quarters.

As the girl grows older she learns to smoke the family pipe and becomes as attached to it as her mother is.

When she is twelve or thirteen years old she begins to observe the age-old customs which until then she has been able to ignore. For instance, now she must never eat before a boy of her own age or older. Furthermore, she must never see him eat if there is any possibility that he may some day be a suitor for her hand in marriage.

She bleaches her hair and adorns her body with all possible ornaments. She dons her grass skirts and attends dances now. Her father and brothers are interested in giving her beads and other ornaments, for a well-favoured girl will bring more cattle when the marriage price is discussed. Her father and brothers are dictators as to what she may do and as to what plans may be made

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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Chapter Four

CUTTING THE TRIBAL MARKS

DETAILS OF THE RITE

BY far the most important event in the life of a Nuer boy comes when he has about reached the age of puberty. His people decide that he must have the tribal marks (Fig. 8) cut when the cold winds blow. He knows that now, at least for a short time, he will be the centre of attraction in his village. The younger boys follow after him; he enjoys their admiration and envy.

He has his hair shaved off, not a spear of hair must be left. He removes all his clothing, if he has any, and beads. Ornaments of all kinds, every one of them, must be discarded.

Some men are known to be expert at cutting the tribal marks and they are much in demand as the season of cold winds approaches, for each year there are usually boys in each locality who must have the tribal marks cut and the services of some one who is an adept at the work is required.

Usually this rite is executed upon several boys at the same time and place, so that they may find companionship in the company of each other while they recuperate from this dreadful ordeal. For ordeal it is, no matter how much they try to bolster up their courage.

The boys are allotted a house in which to sleep the night before this rite takes place. Sometimes they secure the kind of pillow which is used by Nuer women, a ring of cane-leaves having a hole in the centre. They practice sleeping on it, for they must use that kind of a pillow until their wounds heal.

The night passes, but little sleeping is done. Before daybreak the people are stirring, for the man who will

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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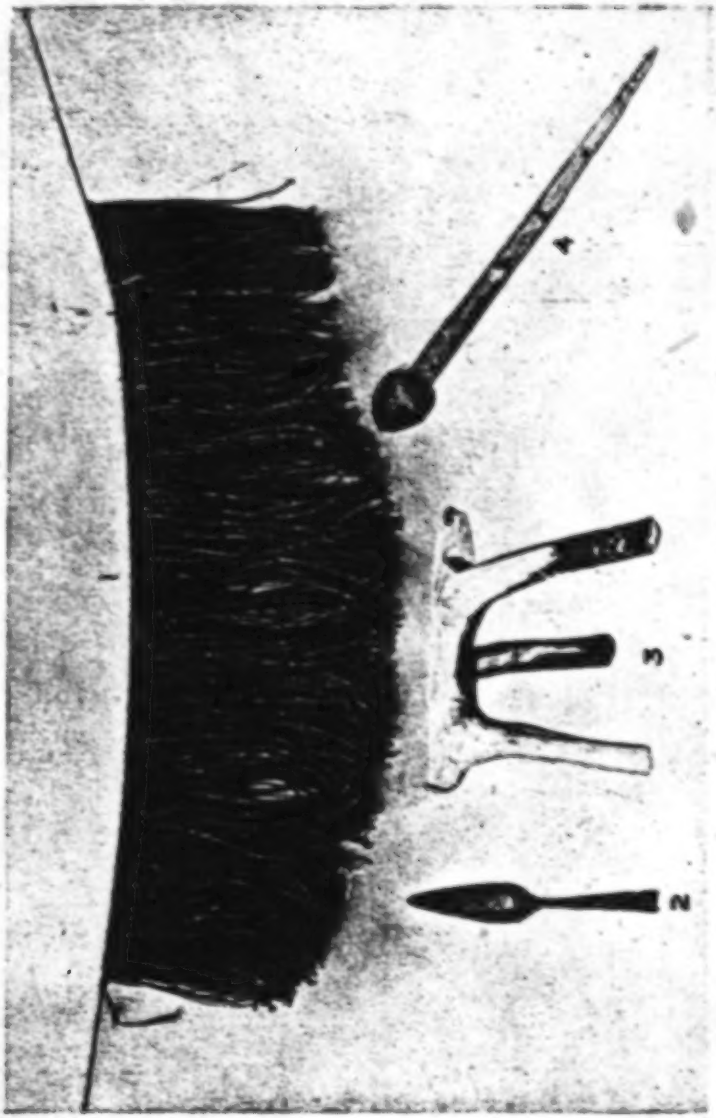

Fig. 4. ESSENTIAL ARTICLES

1. Short grass skirt. 2. Blade of spear. 3. Pillow (for men). 4. Club

[facing p. 32]

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

811 confirmed to some extent by the evidence of my photographs,[1] supported these conclusions, but I asked Dr. Lienhardt and Dr. Howell to verify them, which they have been able to do. It should
● [513] follow also that a husband sleeps on the right side of the hut and his wife on the left side, and here again Dr. Lienhardt has been good enough to confirm that this is the invariable practice. He has made a further and important observation. I was aware that the
[823] west is associated with death and the east with life, but I did not know, till he told me, that east is identified with right and west with left, thus bringing into the left–right polarity the polar representations not only of life and death but also of the cardinal points east and west. I am indebted to Dr. Mary Smith for the further observation that Nuer speak of 'right-handed peace' (*'mal me cuec'*). They would never speak of left-handed peace.

It is in accord with what we have learnt of the associations with
[826] left and right in Nuer thought that Nuer youths should empha-
301 size the contrast between the two hands by putting the left arm out of action altogether for months or even a year or two. This they do by pressing a series of metal rings (*thiau*) into the flesh of the left arm from the wrist upwards so tightly that sores and great pain result and the arm is rendered useless for any purpose other than the display of fortitude and as a passive instrument for the right hand to play upon (Plate XII). A ring on a finger of the right hand is rubbed up and down the discs on the imprisoned left arm to accompany the compliments and endearments of courtship. Such a mutilation is only fully intelligible in terms of symbolic associations. Here the fact that it is only the left horn of favourite
[231] oxen which is debased (if the right is trained at all it is trained upwards) is of great significance, for, as will be seen, a man and his favourite ox are identified. What he does to his left hand he does to his ox's left horn: what he does to the ox he does to himself.

826 It is perhaps important to add that Nuer do not think of the
811 left hand as being in a material sense evil. Left-handed persons suffer no disabilities at all and are not considered in other respects as different from other people. Nuer do not, in my experience, attach any importance to the matter, but simply say of a left-

[1] All deformed horns in the photographs are left horns. Some branches in them, however, are to the left of the windscreens, but Nuer erect branches for practical purposes as well as for religious reasons, and I do not think it is possible to distinguish between them by sight.